

SPANISH TORTURE UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES.

(Illustrated.)

It has been said that a man's mind is often subject to three evolutionary stages when confronted with a statement opposed to his views. He declares—

- 1st. It is absolutely untrue;
- 2d. It is contrary to the Bible; and
- 3d. He always did believe it.

This theory seems to be pretty well illustrated in the evolution of the imperialistic supporters of the national administration with regard to the torture of Filipinos by our troops in the Archipelago. When it was first charged that the water cure and other tortures were being systematically used by our army in the Philippines for the accomplishment of a military purpose, the assertion was, with marked unanimity, promptly and indignantly denied as absolutely untrue.

The next step of the Imperialists was to assert that these charges of torture were simply sporadic acts of our soldiers under great provocation in retaliation for outrages committed by the Filipinos. To make any mention of them, however, was to "defame the army." Besides, it was contrary to General Order No. 100, promulgated originally by President Lincoln in 1863, and now, as Secretary Root said, "the practical and effective guide and rule of conduct to which every officer understands that he must conform." Then, too, Rule 16 of this General Order explicitly states:

"Military necessity does not admit of cruelty—that is, the infliction of suffering or for revenge, nor of maiming or wounding except in fight, nor of torture to extort confessions."

Secretary Root, in his letter to Senator Lodge, dated February 17, 1902, said :

" . . . You will perceive that in substantially every case the report has proved to be either unfounded or grossly exaggerated. . . .

"That such occurrences (water cure, etc.) have been sanctioned or

permitted is not true. A constant and effective pressure of prohibition, precept, and discipline has been maintained against them. That there has been any such practice is not true. The cases have been few and far between, scattered infrequently over a great area of country along the course of three years of active conflict, through thousands of engagements and among many thousands of troops. That these occasional cases have characterized our army or conduct is not true. . . . The war in the Philippines has been conducted by the American army with scrupulous regard for the rules of civilized warfare, with careful and genuine consideration for the prisoner and non-combatant, with self-restraint, and with humanity never surpassed, if ever equaled, in any conflict, worthy only of praise, and reflecting credit upon the American people."

Finally, it is now frankly admitted by those who formerly denied it, that torture, especially the water cure, has been used not as a retaliatory measure, but for a military purpose—*i. e.*, to get information or guns from the Filipinos. The practice is excused on the ground that it is the only way "to make them talk"; that it has been the means of saving the lives of thousands of natives as well as the lives of our troops; that it is harmless; that it is a good thing, etc. It is significant, however, that this admission was not made until the fact had been indisputably established by the testimony given by over a dozen soldier witnesses before the Senate Philippine Committee.

We present on the following page a reproduction of a photograph showing the "water cure" being administered to a Filipino prisoner. We have ample proof of its genuineness. The original was obtained from Michael J. Bergen, of Trenton, N. J., formerly of Company A, Seventeenth United States Infantry, by J. LeRoy Smith, representing CITY AND STATE, Philadelphia. Bergen stated to Mr. Smith that it was taken in May, 1901, at Sual, Philippine Islands, by his tent-mate, Corporal George J. Vennage (also of Company A, Seventeenth United States Infantry), who is now in the Post-office at Manila. Vennage had a small pocket kodak with him on the "hike" and took a snap-shot of the "hydraulic treatment." The picture shows Private Harry C. Ford (Company A, Seventeenth United States Infantry) holding a bamboo stick in the Filipino's mouth. The native pouring the water is a Macabebé named Pedro, who was assistant cook for the regiment. Bergen is standing at the extreme right, only the lower half of his body being shown. The victim is a Filipino named Mariana.

Pedro is one of those Macabebes (our allies) to whom President Roosevelt thus referred in his annual message, December 3, 1901:

"The heartiest praise is due to large numbers of natives of the islands for their steadfast loyalty. The Macabebes have been conspicuous for their courage and devotion to the flag. I recommend that the Secretary of





War be empowered to take some systematic action in the way of aiding those of these men who are crippled in the service, and the families of those who are killed."

An officer of high rank, serving in the Philippines, whose identity is known to us, referred to the Macabebes and the water-cure *policy* as follows, in writing to a brother officer :

"A company of Macabebes enter a town or barrio, catch some man,—it matters not whom,—ask him if he knows where there are any guns, and upon receiving a negative answer, five or six of them throw him down, one holds his head, while others have hold of an arm or a leg. They then proceed to give him the 'water torture,' which is the distention of the internal organs with water. After they are distended a cord is sometimes placed around the body and the water expelled. From what I have heard, it appears to be generally applied, and its use is not confined to our section. Although it results in the finding of a number of guns, it does us an infinite amount of harm. *Nor are the Macabebes the only ones who use this method of obtaining information.* [Italics ours.] Personally, I have never seen this torture inflicted, nor have I ever knowingly allowed it, but I have seen a victim a few minutes afterward, with his mouth bleeding where it had been cut by a bayonet used to hold the mouth open, and his face bruised where he had been struck by the Macabebes. Add to this the expression of his face and his evident weakness from the torture, and you have a picture which once seen will not be forgotten. I am not chicken-hearted, but this policy hurts us. Summary executions are, and will be, necessary in a troubled country, and I have no objection to seeing that they are carried out; but I am not used to torture. The Spaniards used the torture of water, throughout the islands, as a means of obtaining information, but they used it sparingly, and only when it appeared evident that the victim was culpable. Americans seldom do things by halves. We come here and announce our intention of freeing the people from three or four hundred years of oppression, and say 'we are strong, and powerful, and grand.' Then to resort to inquisitorial methods, and use them without discrimination, is unworthy of us and will recoil on us as a nation."

General Otis, in his report dated May 4, 1900, stated that the native scouts and police in the service of the United States were ruthless and cruel; that they did not regard looting as a crime at all, and that they often resorted to torture as a means of eliciting a confession.

Governor Taft, in his testimony before the Senate Philippine Committee, referring to this matter, said (page 74) :

"I have heard charges of whipping and charges of what has been alluded to as the water cure. They were rife in Manila."

And again (page 75) :

"What I am trying to do is to state what seemed to us to be the explanation of these cruelties—that cruelties have been inflicted; that

people have been shot when they ought not to have been ; that there have been individual instances of water cure, that torture which I believe involves pouring water down the throat so that the man swells and gets the impression that he is going to be suffocated and then tells what he knows, which was a frequent treatment under the Spaniards, I am told—all these things are true.'

The Springfield (Mass.) "Republican" published a summary of the evidence under oath before the Senate Philippine Committee, as to the use of the water torture by our soldiers to secure guns or information. It is as follows :

" 1. Captain McDonald, Sergeant Charles S. Riley, Sergeant Davis, and Private Smith, of the Twenty-sixth Volunteer Infantry, all testified before the Senate Committee that they saw the water torture administered to the native presidente of Igbaras, Island of Panay, November 27, 1900. On the strength of the confession obtained, a town having 12,000 inhabitants was burned to the ground.

" 2. Sergeants L. E. Hallock and J. H. Manning, of the Twenty-sixth Volunteer Infantry, testified before the Senate Committee that they saw the water torture administered to twelve natives at Leon, Island of Panay, to secure information as to the disappearance of Private O'Herne, of the same regiment.

" 3. Private Daniel J. Evans, of the Twelfth Infantry, testified before the Senate Committee that he saw the water torture administered to two natives in northern Luzon to secure confessions.

" 4. Sergeant Isador H. Dube, of the Twenty-sixth Volunteer Infantry, testified before the Senate Committee that he saw the water torture administered in Panay to a native, in the presence of Captain Glenn and Lieutenant Conger.

" 5. Lieutenant Grover Flint, of the Thirty-fifth Volunteer Infantry, testified before the Senate Committee that he had seen the water torture administered to at least twenty different natives, at different times, in Luzon. Major Geary, his superior officer, was always near and cognizant of the proceedings.

" 6. Private R. H. Hughes, of the Eighth Infantry, testified before the Senate Committee, on May 6th, that he saw the water torture administered to a native in Luzon.

" 7. George C. Boardman, of the Twentieth Infantry, testified before the Senate Committee that he saw the water torture administered to a native in Luzon.

" 8. Corporal William J. Gibbs, of the Ninth Infantry, testified that he was cognizant of the infliction of the water torture upon a native who died from the results of it. This case was evidently in Samar. Corporal Gibbs testified that the water used was salt water, mixed with sand ; also that the torture was in common use.

" 9. Major Cornelius Gardener, governor of Tayabas province, Luzon, called upon for specifications in support of his allegations, declared 'that certain United States troops coming from San Pablo, in or near the town of Dolores, tortured a native by the water cure.'

" 10. Major Cornelius Gardener also specified that the commanding officer of Laguimanos tortured a native boy.

" 11. Major Cornelius Gardener also specified 'that troops coming from Lucena or Tayabas on several occasions tortured natives belonging to the pueblo of Pagbilo.' (Note—'On several occasions' means that several different cases of torture thus occurred.)

" 12. Among the official reports received at the War Department may be found the following case:

" 'A detachment of Macabebes, desiring to elicit information in regard to the whereabouts of a body of insurgents, seized a woman and demanded that she should disclose their position. The woman failing to comply with the demand, the "water cure" was employed. This was ineffectual, and then some of the men jumped on the woman, who lay on the ground with the water exuding from her lips.' "

" These Macabebes were United States troops or scouts, with American officers, and they were employed in Luzon.

" 13. In the official reports received at the War Department is an account of the case of Lieutenant Hagedorn, who, in order to secure confessions, put three natives in the stocks, deprived them of water for two days and nights, and, at the same time, fed them salt fish. Lieutenant Hagedorn reported that 'this diet had excellent results.' Colonel Hood, his superior, commended Lieutenant Hagendorn for 'energetic and valuable service,' although he may have acted 'mistakenly' in using torture.

" Here are thirteen different exposures of the use of physical torture, although the actual number of individual cases of torture represented is very much greater than thirteen, being in the vicinity of fifty. Every one is drawn from the official records of the War Department or from sworn testimony of soldiers whose veracity has not been impeached. The cases range in point of time as far back as 1900, and they occurred in Luzon, various provinces of Panay and Samar, three different islands. Corporal Gibbs testified that the torture was in 'common use.' Another witness said that there was a regular water-torture 'squad.' The reader must judge from all these facts whether the use of this torture to secure confessions was sporadic and exceptional or widely prevalent in the army."

The following letter by Mr. Joseph Lee, which appeared in a recent issue of the Boston "Transcript," is interesting in connection with this subject. Mr. Lee wrote:

" By printing the letter of private Weir and the rest of the evidence in the case of the torture of Filipinos by Sergeant Edwards by order of Lieutenant Arnold you have helped your readers a long step forward in the understanding of this question of torture in the Philippines.

" Your article shows that Weir's letter giving specific details of most revolting torture, ordered by the one officer and executed by the other, was written in April, 1901, and that an investigation corroborating Weir's

testimony was reported to the War Department in August, 1901, and yet we know that nothing has yet been done to punish these officers, and the indignation expressed by the War Department, now that the facts are brought out and public expression of their attitude is forced upon them, is directed not against the torturers, but against those who have brought these facts to light.

"These dates show that this evidence was all before Mr. Root when he said that 'he had no further knowledge' concerning Philippine cruelty, and so prevented this case from being brought to light. He had it all when he was so fierce against Miles for daring to hint that all was not sweet in those islands.

"Peeling off a strip of flesh by winding it on a stick is not cruelty, then; nor hanging a man by the thumbs, nor beating, water cure, etc. Either Mr. Root considers these things not cruel, or he—what was he doing when he made that statement? How many more stories like this one was he keeping back? This was not a tale of cruelty—what is the rest of the story that he could tell us if his definition of what is cruel were less exacting?

"Mr. Root has said that the war has been carried on in accordance with the Lieber code. The Lieber code forbids torture. What did the Secretary's statement mean? It is a little too late now for Mr. Root to trust to the complaint that those who are trying to put a stop to such things are 'attacking the army.' Did 'the army' do those things? Somebody, indeed, is responsible; but it is not the army. It is the man who tries to cover up the facts, who lets the evil-doer go unpunished while he attacks those who seek to bring the facts to light.

"Some of us believe that the honor of the American army is sound enough and safe enough and pure enough to bear the light of day; and we are having the conviction more and more forced upon us that the extreme unwillingness of the War Department to have the facts brought to light, that its feverish resentment against any one who does anything to reveal what has actually been going on in the Philippines, grows out of a desire to protect not the honor of the army, but the political interests of persons much nearer home."